

Hugh Matheson was a noted yachtsman and benefactor of the Dade County Park System upon his death, February, 1952.

He was a native from Long Island and came to Miami in 1904 as a teenage student in the Florida Adirondacks School which later became the Ransom School. In 1911, after graduating from Yale University, he returned to join his father, the late William Matheson and family in the propagation of coconuts.

The family, guided by the father and Hugh as the eldest son acquired extensive real estate holdings throughout the county and other interests which pulled up a family fortune.

In the early 1930's, the Mathesons donated a large tract of Biscayne Bayfront land which became Matheson Hammock and the first unit in the County's Park system.

In 1940, Hugh and the other two heirs of William Matheson donated the North end of Biscayne Key to Dade County for development into what today is Crandon Park.

w. Liquori Hardy Matheson

c. William J. - Hugh M. Jr.

Finlay L - R. Hardy Matheson

"Hugh Merrit Matheson Dies Benefactor of County Parks." The Miami Herald, Feb. 19, 1952. Biblio 4-4

It was William J. Matheson's son Hugh Sr. who covered the island with coconut trees in what was to have been a commercial coconut plantation. In 1932, the deal was abandoned when they found out that they could not compete with the cheap coconuts from the Philippines. A nursery continued to operate for sometime after that date.

"House Never A Home", The Miami Herald. By: Stephen Trumbull. Feb. 26, 1956.

Prior to 1932, the Matheson Plantation covered nearly 1000 acres. The plantation dates back to 1908 when Hugh's father W.J. Matheson purchased most of Biscayne Bay from Mary W. Osborn, whose husband Ezra attempted to grow coconuts in the 19th century. In 1968, Biscayne was purchased by Telephone and Telegraph, owner of the Sheraton Hotels.